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3 Transcript of Proceedings  
4 Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project  
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10 wednesday, July 7, 2010  
11 6:30 p.m.  
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13 Torres Martinez Administration Building  
14 66725 Martinez Street  
15 Thermal, California  
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19 Reported By:  
20 Terri L. Emery  
21 CSR No. 11598, CCR  
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A P P E A R A N C E S

MODERATOR:

Rick Davis, The Davis Group

SPEAKER PANEL:

Rob Thomson, Entrix

Lanika Cervantes, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Arturo Delgado, California Department of Fish and Game

1           MR. EVERETT: So in other words, at this point  
2 there is no plans to restore the sea at all.

3           MR. THOMSON: The legislature has not chosen what  
4 to do about that. The legislature has allowed for the  
5 Department of Fish and Game to do this project and  
6 conserve the fish and wildlife that are dependent upon the  
7 sea and gain a little bit of information to go forward  
8 should they move forward with how to restore the sea.

9           MRS. EVERETT: Just to clarify, are you saying it  
10 will be one of those circles or all three?

11          MR. THOMSON: It could be all three. It could be  
12 one. We are in the process of determining alternatives to  
13 be evaluated, and there are alternatives that are being  
14 looked at that would use all three and there are  
15 alternatives that would only use one of each of the  
16 three.

17          MR. DAVIS: We're kind of jumping ahead. We need  
18 to get the names for the record and all that stuff. Would  
19 you mind giving us your names so we can put them in the  
20 record?

21          MR. EVERETT: It's Don Everett, E-v-e-r-e-t-t.

22          MR. DAVIS: Thank you.

23          MR. EVERETT: And this is my wife Joann.

24          MR. DAVIS: And hopefully you've signed in too.

25          MR. EVERETT: Yes, we did. I left my E-mail.

1           MR. DAVIS: We want to have a good process, but  
2 we just want to --

3           MR. KEENE: Just wanted to go ahead and clarify  
4 your comment about is there a plan to sort of protect the  
5 sea, and there is a plan. The resources agency for the  
6 State of California, which is again the agency for this  
7 project, has proposed a plan to go ahead and basically  
8 restore the Salton Sea. Now, it's not going to be a whole  
9 sea, it's going partitions of the sea that it can protect.

10           And that plan is in front of the legislature for  
11 consideration. They have not adopted it nor taken any  
12 action whatsoever on that plan, but in the interim, the  
13 Department of Fish and Game and Corps of Engineers are  
14 moving forward with this plan, this proposal, as an  
15 interim measure before a final plan is finally approved.

16           So there is a plan it just hasn't been approved  
17 yet.

18           MR. EVERETT: Since the State is bankrupt, it's  
19 pretty much a moot point.

20           MR. THOMSON: So back to that descriptor for just  
21 a second. How can you help us best in this public comment  
22 period? The focus, we would hope that you would focus on  
23 what is the scope and content of the Environmental Impact  
24 Report and the Environmental Impact Statement.

25           This process is designed to ensure that the

1 public and concerned agencies have the opportunity to help  
2 mold and fashion what is the scope of the analysis and  
3 what are its contents; specifically, what are the goals  
4 and objectives of the project. Are they sufficiently  
5 narrow or are they sufficiently broad? Are they covering  
6 the issues that this project, given the limited  
7 legislature mandate to protect fish and wildlife dependent  
8 upon the Salton Sea, do they cover it? What are the  
9 alternatives we should evaluate? Are these the  
10 appropriate alternative locations, for example, and what  
11 are the potential effects? Is the list of potential  
12 impacts listed in the Notice of Preparation, the extent,  
13 the breadth and depth of those effects?

14           If you can make your comments, be as specific as  
15 possible, it's not so much of a problem here because  
16 there's only a few of you and we have plenty of time to  
17 let you get your thoughts out, but if you can make them be  
18 as specific as possible, try to -- if you're going to  
19 speak, please try to speak as clearly as possible. Not  
20 too much of a problem here because Terri is going to get  
21 your words down, and try to be succinct so others have the  
22 opportunity to comment as well. That's it.

23           MR. DAVIS: Thank you, sir. So with that we will  
24 officially open the public comment section, but we did get  
25 your comments as well, Mr. and Mrs. Everett. Thank you.

1           Bruce Underwood is here to speak as a  
2 representative of Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector  
3 Control. I'll give you the microphone, sir. That way you  
4 can be heard.

5           MR. UNDERWOOD: Good evening. Thank you for  
6 allowing me to come and speak tonight. Thanks to the Army  
7 Corps of Engineers and Fish and Game for putting this  
8 together. I represent the Coachella Valley Mosquito and  
9 Vector Control District. I'm currently serving as  
10 president of that board. My background for information is  
11 a preventive specialist of preventive diseases.

12           When I look at the project up here, I see the key  
13 issues and biological issues. What I see missing is what  
14 is the human impact in terms of disease, and that's really  
15 the concern of our District and the public health issue  
16 related to that. My doctorate is actually in public  
17 health prevention, so the vector board doesn't deal  
18 directly with public health for people but it deals with  
19 the impact of vectors on the public health.

20           So my concern is number one, from the board's  
21 perspective always is a financial concern, what is going  
22 to be the result of the unintended consequences of this  
23 project in terms of its production of more habitats for  
24 mosquitoes specifically in this 2400-acre project.

25           Currently, as I understand the issue, we have

1 about 50 to 60 acres that are currently kind of similar  
2 habitats in this area that are -- and we believe that they  
3 produce -- these kind of habitats produce a number of  
4 mosquitoes, therefore impacting the potential of west Nile  
5 virus, which is a long historic problem at least for the  
6 last ten years in this country.

7           And I think those are the major issues that the  
8 board has and I know that Dr. Lothrop has spoken earlier  
9 at 1:00 o'clock and spoken to the issues of some of the  
10 specific biological issues related to the vectors and the  
11 habitats, and heretofore the vector district has never  
12 been included in this process, which is to me unfortunate,  
13 and that's part of the reason that our board wanted  
14 Dr. Lothrop to go this afternoon and for me to come  
15 tonight, and we are going to send approximately a four- to  
16 six-page letter outlining all these issues.

17           But I think those of you who are the other  
18 stakeholders have been involved in this process, but  
19 really so far the human element, the human biology has not  
20 really been considered. I know there are -- Department of  
21 Public Health in Imperial County have a vector control  
22 section, but I don't know if they're going to appear  
23 tomorrow as well because it also could impact Imperial  
24 County. Of course these diseases typically affect most  
25 likely the young and the elderly because their immune

1 systems are the most undeveloped or worn out, if you will.  
2 So that's our concern. And really for us, if one person  
3 is to die from West Nile, that's really a tragedy, even  
4 though I know there is concerns about the biology and  
5 making sure that the birds and fish have an environment as  
6 well, but I'm also concerned about the larger global  
7 issues of human health, even though that's not our direct  
8 responsibility. Our responsibility is to control vectors,  
9 not necessarily the human health.

10 So that's really the intent of my being here  
11 tonight, and our board is going to send an official letter  
12 and we're going to meet on next Tuesday night, and I don't  
13 think there's anybody -- there's not too many public  
14 people here tonight. Most of you are government-related  
15 people, but you're all welcome to come to our board  
16 meeting and speak as well. We're going to meet and we've  
17 got a letter drafted and it's in our board packet for our  
18 meeting next Tuesday, so you'll get that letter.

19 I know you have already recorded all of  
20 Dr. Lothrop's comments, and so for me again, it's really  
21 the public health issue and the cost issue and the  
22 unintended consequences of your actions that I'm concerned  
23 about that you may not have considered here before. Thank  
24 you very much.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Where are you having a



1 meeting?

2 MR. UNDERWOOD: We meet in Indio on Trader.

3 MS. LOTHROP: 43420 --

4 MR. UNDERWOOD: It's on our website.

5 MS. LOTHROP: I have a card, my business card.

6 You can get the phone number and also the address.

7 MR. UNDERWOOD: And we post all our stuff on our  
8 website. We meet the second Tuesday at 6:00 o'clock of  
9 every month, although we're planning to go dark for the  
10 first time. So that's our public meeting.

11 MR. DAVIS: 43420 Trader, Indio.

12 MR. KEENE: It would be helpful in your letter to  
13 the project needs, if you could identify any measures that  
14 you believe are feasible to be implemented to help  
15 mitigate these impacts. We do want to engage the vector  
16 control districts and do anything possible to ameliorate  
17 the impacts of the project to the extent it's feasible.  
18 So with your expertise, it would be very helpful if  
19 probably your letter enumerates some of the measures that  
20 should be considered, at least in your agency's opinion,  
21 to have to help relieve some of these effects. That will  
22 help guide us in preparation of the document rather than  
23 us guessing what might be worthwhile here.

24 MS. LOTHROP: We definitely can state the  
25 conditions which do not abode mosquito breeding, so you

1 can start with that. I not being an engineer, I don't  
2 really want to get into the details how to put your ponds  
3 together, but we can definitely tell you these habitats  
4 usually do not support mosquitos if they have running  
5 water, if the water is deep that much, if the area has no  
6 sloped edges. As I said this morning, quality of water is  
7 not the issue. Mosquitoes will adapt to the fresh or salt  
8 or brackish water. There is no difference for them there.

9 MR. KEENE: If there's any mechanical means or  
10 technical means or anything else to control the vectors,  
11 then I think you should enumerate those in your letter so  
12 that -- and give guidance to the agencies here.

13 MS. LOTHROP: Because I think that's what  
14 Dr. Underwood mentioned, that the concern is that at this  
15 point if you increase the habitat for so many acres than  
16 what we currently have. We do have methods of using the  
17 biorational products, which as I mentioned this morning  
18 they're vicarious or insect growth regulators which are  
19 target-specific, which means it will kill only mosquitoes  
20 and they are not really considered a pesticide. They're  
21 called biorationals, but that includes our labor, somebody  
22 else's labor, and the cost of the product and application  
23 on a regular basis.

24 There are certain physical methods which you can  
25 apply before you build your ponds to make sure that they

1 support the least possible habitat for mosquito breeding.  
2 what my personal concern is that every man-made wetland  
3 after two to three years gets overgrown with vegetation,  
4 the water settles, the dust settles, and the water  
5 quality, the type of the emerging submerged and floating  
6 vegetation promotes mosquito breeding. If you do  
7 introduce fish as a control factor, you will have a hard  
8 time keeping up with that because the birds will use that  
9 as their attraction to come there and feed on. Then you  
10 have to have a specific type of fish in the ponds to be  
11 able to control mosquitoes.

12 Have in mind that this environment here has a  
13 year-round mosquito breeding. It's not like northern  
14 California when they go to bed, what I said asleep, for a  
15 few months. Here they're active through the whole year.  
16 It's just sometimes a little bit their cycle is faster and  
17 they finish within five days in the winter, that's two  
18 weeks, but it's always there. We have virus from usually  
19 April, May, June, up to the end of October beginning of  
20 November. At the other parts of the year the virus is  
21 still here but in such a low -- we'll say the virus is  
22 very low with the birds that we cannot detect it, but it's  
23 just not only West Nile, having in mind this is the very  
24 hot spot for Saint Louis equine which for decades actually  
25 here in the valley.

1           So we will try to put some and provide you maybe  
2 with some of our best management practices for the  
3 wetlands and that's maybe what can help you with, and as I  
4 said, we are here, available to work with you.

5           MR. MACE: I spoke to this briefly. I'm glad you  
6 guys you could come and speak because it hadn't occurred  
7 to me, but the Corps, we work with a lot of vector control  
8 districts to try to figure out ways -- when we get  
9 permits, a lot of times they have to build a whale, so we  
10 actually create nuisance spots, so we try to figure out  
11 how to achieve both. As part of the NEPA process and  
12 seeing that through, it's your expertise and we would love  
13 to have your comments and help us.

14           MS. LOTHROP: Southern California, there is a  
15 task force, the Corps of Engineers, including the Orange  
16 County and other districts including ours to try to really  
17 find the best way of how to -- how to not expose more  
18 habitats and build more habitats for mosquitos because  
19 majority of the residents here think we don't have  
20 mosquitos here, but we do.

21           As I said, we collect up to 10,000 mosquitoes per  
22 one trap.

23           MR. MACE: What's great is that task force, Jay  
24 Chun, he's doing duty back east, so I'm going to be the  
25 guy on that task force.

1 MS. LOTHROP: That's good. Thank you.

2 MR. DAVIS: Thank you very much. Other anyone  
3 other comments, questions? Mrs. Everett.

4 MRS. EVERETT: I'm wondering about the  
5 conservationist groups. I don't think that they're  
6 represented in here tonight. Are they involved in this at  
7 all?

8 MR. DELGADO: Currently we're holding a  
9 quarterly basis stakeholder meetings and they're involved,  
10 they're invited to the stakeholder meetings, so they're  
11 definitely involved.

12 MRS. EVERETT: They are involved. One other  
13 question. The Torres Martinez Band of Indians, how are  
14 they involved?

15 MR. DELGADO: The answer is the same. They're  
16 attending stakeholder meetings. Actually we have members  
17 here today.

18 MRS. EVERETT: Are they assuming a financial  
19 responsibility in this at all or -- it's  
20 government-to-government I know and so I don't know how  
21 that exactly works or whether it's just sharing  
22 information.

23 MR. DELGADO: The funds for this project will be  
24 provided by the Salton Sea restoration fund which the  
25 Department of Fish and Game administers. This will be

1 fully funded by the state.

2 MR. KEENE: As part of this project we will  
3 consult with the Torres Martinez Tribe and other tribes as  
4 well as to the impact of the actions on their cultural  
5 resources for one, on their plans, development plans for  
6 the area, on various different aspects that the tribe  
7 feels are pertinent that need to be addressed within the  
8 document. So the government-to-government consultation is  
9 part of the Corps of Engineers' responsibility as the  
10 federal government and that will be conducted as part of  
11 that.

12 Yes, we definitely want to engage the tribe and  
13 talk to them about issues they have and they perceive with  
14 this project, how it might impact them, and we want to  
15 engage basically all of the other stakeholders including  
16 vector groups and everyone else, see how our actions might  
17 have some impacts or any inadvertent consequences to their  
18 plan or their mission. So that's part and parcel for  
19 these meetings that we have right now is to try to get  
20 their input so that we're not guessing as to what those  
21 effects might be, that we're being told by experts in this  
22 area that these concerns need to be addressed.

23 MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Chuck. Are there other  
24 comments, questions? Go ahead.

25 MRS. EVERETT: Have you had some historical

1 experience with this type of project? I know you showed  
2 some pictures up there. You must have encountered the  
3 same problems as being presented here tonight.

4 MR. DELGADO: Actually, the Department of Fish  
5 and Game, the Corps of Engineers, and Department of Water  
6 Resources, we do quite a bit of these projects at least  
7 within the state of California on a statewide basis. Fish  
8 and Game has implemented some soft pond restoration  
9 projects up in the bay area. I know the Army Corps has  
10 been involved in a lot of different wetland creation  
11 projects and DWR is anything that has to do with water.  
12 DWR is involved in those type of projects, so I think we  
13 probably have a wealth of experience to the table on this.  
14 Hopefully we have a successful project.

15 MR. KEENE: Torres Martinez has created the  
16 wetlands here on their location and they're collecting  
17 data right now. That's the function of those wetland  
18 areas, and so there's a lot of things to be learned.

19 we don't know -- we don't have all the answers  
20 and we're not saying that this is, you know, going to be a  
21 completely successful project. That's why we're  
22 characterizing it as a proof of concept type project. In  
23 other words, we're going to go ahead and build these based  
24 on the best available scientific information, but there  
25 may be issues that come up during the scope of building

1 these that we hope to learn from and adapt our later  
2 construction efforts on and make those changes.

3 MR. DAVIS: Ted from Water Resources.

4 MR. FRANK: Maybe Arturo can talk about  
5 consulting --

6 MR. DELGADO: Good point. Ted was just  
7 mentioning that we also have a consulting firm on board  
8 who has an incredible amount of expertise in this field.  
9 Rob Thomson is the program manager from the consulting  
10 firm that we selected of interest. Rob, do you want to  
11 say more about -- we also have part of a team that  
12 includes Ducks Unlimited, which many of you know have been  
13 doing this kind of work for decades.

14 MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir, Mr. Everett.

15 MR. EVERETT: The stakeholders meeting they had  
16 in Indian Wells, the professor there that said we were  
17 going to lose six feet a year approximately in the water  
18 level. If that's true and it continues, are there any --  
19 is EPA involved in the air quality that's going to arise  
20 when the dust and stuff starts coming out of that lake?

21 MR. THOMSON: Let me try to dissPELL a few of  
22 the data points. The evaporation off the Salton Sea, off  
23 of any open water in this valley is about six feet per  
24 year, but the sea doesn't go down six feet a year.  
25 There's inflow of at this point about five and a half,



1 between five and a half and five feet a year that replaces  
2 that water. So the sea is dropping at this point  
3 somewhere between a half a foot and one foot per year  
4 based on the current inflow. Chuck, you want to talk  
5 about air quality? Probably better at that than I am.

6 MR. KEENE: This project won't specifically  
7 address air quality as far as exposure of playa or sea bed  
8 as the sea reseeds. That's been addressed as part of the  
9 larger project, that document. This project will address  
10 air quality insofar as it creates an air quality issue we  
11 do construction, so we will have to mitigate those affects  
12 consistent with the Clean Air Act. So we will be doing  
13 that.

14 But as far as the larger project is concerned,  
15 that's the one that addresses the air quality concerns  
16 right now. Unfortunately absent a project, absent any  
17 action from the State, the responsibility for attention to  
18 air quality due to exposed areas falls on the underlying  
19 landowner. By and large the underlying landowner of the  
20 land around the sea is the Imperial Irrigation District.  
21 There are some federal holdings and there are a limited  
22 amount of state holdings and a lot of private holdings as  
23 well, and that responsibility, absent a state restoration  
24 project, would fall on those entities, and Imperial County  
25 as well as the South Coast Air Quality Management District

1 would probably go to those landowners if they see a  
2 problem occurring from emissions from their land and ask  
3 them to control those emissions and do so with the best  
4 available technology, best available control measures.

5 MR. DAVIS: Anyone else? Other questions? I  
6 want to thank Pat Cooper from Senator Ducheny's office for  
7 coming today. Any other questions? And staff from the  
8 agencies will be here if we have any follow-ups, and thank  
9 you for being here and we'll have another meeting tomorrow  
10 in Calipatria and Brawley. Thank you.

11 (Proceedings concluded at 7:31 p.m.)  
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

I, Terri L. Emery, Certified Shorthand Reporter,  
in and for the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were taken before me  
at the time and place herein set forth; that the  
proceedings were reported stenographically by me and  
later transcribed into typewriting under my direction;  
that the foregoing is a true record of the proceedings  
taken at that time.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my name this  
16th day of July, 2010.

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Terri L. Emery, CSR No. 11598, CCR